

Washington Whispers

[Items appearing on this page are being talked about in Washington or other news centers]

4 Who Plan Foreign Policy . . . Kennedy Cooling on TV Press Conferences? . . . Matchbox Bombs in Cuba

It's asked: Does Kennedy make snap decisions to "get things moving"? The answer you get is this: Kennedy agonizes over decisions until the last moment. However, once he makes a decision, it is solid—"There is no backtracking, no whining."

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High military officials have a low opinion of the guidance given to policy planners by State Department representatives in Laos. The military officers, however, feel very much left out when policies are shaped.

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McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, is referred to on the inside as "Mac the Knife" for the tough way he runs his job.

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Policy planning in world affairs is said to center at the White House in Bundy, his deputy, Walt W. Rostow; Paul Nitze, who handles White House liaison at the Defense Department, and George McGhee, head of policy planning in the State Department.

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President Kennedy, in his first 10 weeks, called only two meetings of the National Security Council. President Eisenhower used this top-level council regularly for policy guidance.

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Explained a high-level official: "With so many policy makers running around the White House, you might see this Administration run pretty much as some university presidents run their faculties: Let the boys fight it out putting one against another if necessary. Then listen and make a decision Franklin Roosevelt did that from time to time."

James Mitchell, Labor Secretary in the Eisenhower Administration, is the likely Republican nominee for Governor of New Jersey for the election this year. Democrats concede that, owing to divisions in the party, Mitchell will be difficult to defeat.

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The British, who were close to the Eisenhower Administration, are finding that they like the Kennedy Administration, too. Remarked a high Britisher: "During the past eight years, certain ideas were out of bounds and brought trouble if raised. Now no policy seems to be sacrosanct, and all ideas can be considered. You feel better even if you do not get your way."

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The President is reported coming around to the view that televised press conferences are "undignified." The sight of newspapermen popping up all over a big hall to make little speeches and cross-examine a President is felt to leave something to be desired.

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At least one chairman of a committee in Congress, referring to the Easter recess, suggested that, if any members wanted to take a trip abroad, it could be arranged and he would approve the trip, for expense purposes, as "official business."

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Pat Brown, California Governor, is laying his plans on the basis that Richard Nixon, former Vice President, will be his opponent when he runs in 1962 for a second term. Brown, worried about unemployment in his State, is assured that more defense contracts will be channeled to California.

Nelson Rockefeller, New York Governor, finds his own political strength rising at a time when Democratic strength in New York State is on the decline because of squabbles within the party. As of now, Democrats almost concede Rockefeller's re-election in 1962.

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Louis Lefkowitz, New York State attorney general, a Republican, is expected to run against the present New York mayor, Robert Wagner, in the next election. Rockefeller is reported working behind the scenes to get a fusion ticket.

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Mike DiSalle, Democratic Governor of Ohio, is a political trouble, with Republicans counting on taking that State in 1962.

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President Kennedy, with Prime Minister Harold Wilson in Britain in the Laos crisis. British officials saw and approved the Kennedy statement on Laos the day before the President read it to his news conference March 23.

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One big reason anti-Castro forces in Cuba are trying to hurry up civil war there: Castro doesn't have much of an Air Force, but he has nearly 1,000 young Cubans in Czechoslovakia learning to fly jets. Once they are ready, the Russians can create a Cuban Air Force overnight.

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In Cuba, the anti-Castro underground is blowing up automobiles, with a chemical time bomb so small it fits into a matchbox. The matchboxes are tossed under parked cars, where they explode, igniting the gas tanks.